

seek to exploit the period of uncertainty. All of this highlights the need for continued sober and steady leadership at the Department.

BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, as we continue to complete the process of our own election here at home, there is also news on the continued growth of democracy half a world away.

My colleagues know that I have had a special interest in the democratic aspirations of the people of Burma for decades, dating back to my days leading the Appropriations Subcommittee for State and Foreign Operations.

Burma held elections on Sunday, which we hope will represent another step toward a more democratic and prosperous future. For too long, the people of Burma were denied democracy by a brutal military junta. To this day, its influence remains a significant impediment to progress. And as with many new democracies, the elections faced many challenges, ranging from continued conflict to the coronavirus pandemic.

But when the votes are counted and Burma's next government is seated, more hard work will await. The government will need to continue advancing Burma's democratic development. Its sovereignty must be defended against the corrupting foreign influence of the People's Republic of China. The nation needs true national reconciliation among Burma's various ethnic groups and further economic reforms to benefit all of its people.

Further progress will take real compromise and real sacrifice from parties and interests within Burma, and it will need continued support from the international community, particularly the United States.

I have known Daw Suu for many years and know she remains committed to democracy. So I hope and expect that if she and her party are the victors, her government will seek much needed constitutional, economic, and security sector reforms to further limit the corrosive influence of the military and the crony networks over so much of the life in Burma.

We are talking about a nation that still reserves 25 percent of the seats in the Parliament for the military itself. It would be an understatement to call that an obstacle toward an ongoing democratic transition.

Further progress toward democracy and prosperity in Burma will require the inclusion of Burma's ethnic minorities and making compromises with them. It will require national reconciliation to end the disparate civil conflicts that rage across that country. And it will require accountability for atrocities that have been committed by the military—and not just in Rakhine State.

If Burma's Government meaningfully pursues these kinds of efforts, I expect

the United States and like-minded countries will continue to stand by them. The free nations of the world have much to gain from Burma's democratization, and we have much to lose if it slides back into authoritarianism or further into the grasp and orbit of China.

So, as Americans, our political contests here at home can feel intense. We think our elections are charged and contentious. But when you look at democracies that are just getting off the ground around the world, you remember how blessed we are to live in a republic that has for centuries inspired the forces of democracy and freedom all around the world.

We get to live in a country where our institutions of self-government have held up for more than 230 years, where the rule of law and our Constitution are paramount.

May we never take it for granted, and may we continue to support those around the world who seek to emulate our example.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on January 20, the Biden-Harris administration will begin its work with a mandate secured by the largest number of votes ever received by a Presidential ticket in American history. Its task, of course, will be daunting. The darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic are, unfortunately, ahead of us. More than 100,000 Americans are being diagnosed with COVID-19 a day, and more than 1,000 Americans are dying.

Soon, thankfully, we will have an administration that actually acknowledges this healthcare crisis—an administration that takes its job seriously and that will listen to the counsel of scientists and doctors and work to improve the lives of all Americans, regardless of whom they voted for.

Already, the incoming administration is preparing to hit the ground running. Yesterday, the President-elect announced his COVID-19 task force, a group of the Nation's top public health experts and scientists who will advise the incoming administration on policy.

Today, Senate Democrats will receive a briefing from one of President-Elect Biden's scientific advisers, former Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy. I expect it will be the first of

many conversations about how the Senate and the incoming administration can work together to get COVID-19 under control and on the retreat, because the truth is, the executive and legislative branches are going to have to work together in the coming months to crush this virus and put our economy back on the right track.

Nearly 15 million Americans have now lost their jobs, and, by extension, many of them have lost their healthcare coverage. Medicaid enrollment has spiked across much of the country, adding new stress to State programs already beleaguered by the demands of COVID-19. Democrats have a plan, through the Heroes Act, to strengthen and secure Medicaid for the duration of the crisis.

Congress should pursue a strong, comprehensive COVID-relief bill that actually meets the needs of the American people. Yesterday, however, the Republican leader suggested the Republican majority will continue to pursue its policy of targeted relief—in other words, inadequate relief. He seemed to suggest that the development of a possible vaccine was actually a reason to pare back on aid to the American people.

Let's be very clear. Getting this country vaccinated will be a massive undertaking, and while I share in the hope that yesterday's news brings, we cannot pretend this pandemic is nearly over. Regardless of this news, it is likely the coming winter months will be the worst yet.

The Nation is suffering from the uncontrolled spread of the virus now. With hospitalizations and fatalities on the rise all across the country, hospitals and healthcare providers are again overwhelmed. Temporary morgues are, once again, sadly, being pressed into service.

We all look forward to the day when vaccination is widely available, but we do not have the luxury of waiting to grapple with the current effects of this crisis until then. We have to act now to prevent the immediate crisis that is coming this winter.

So while the incoming administration prepares to take on a resurgent COVID-19, Congress must as well. Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans must come to the table in good faith and work with us on a bipartisan bill that meets the needs of all our country. The House, of course, is Democratic, and the Senate needs a bipartisan bill to pass something. We have to work in a bipartisan way, and we owe it to the American people.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, I don't think many of us expected President Trump to leave the Office of the Presidency with grace—a quality he has not once demonstrated during his long career in business or his very short career in public life. But the extent to which the Republican